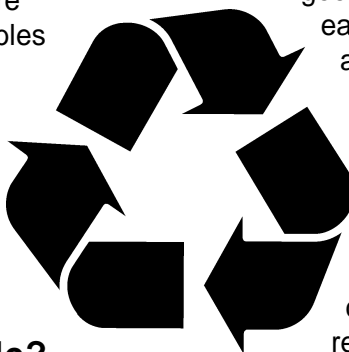




Starting A Business Recycling Program

Why should businesses recycle?

Recycling in commercial enterprises is important because commercial waste makes up about 40 percent of the total municipal solid waste. Business and industry operations generate recyclable materials in many areas, such as offices, cafeterias, supply stores, shipping or warehouse units, print shops, and production areas. Many companies are already enthusiastically collecting recyclables in high-profile programs, while others are just beginning. Collecting recyclables costs money, but it also saves money by reducing the volume of waste that must be disposed of. In addition, the sale of some recyclable materials can generate revenues.



What materials are recyclable?

Generally, materials that have recycling potential are those that can be collected in quantity, free of contamination and that can be economically transported to a processor or end user. A decision to collect such materials also will depend on projected costs and revenues, employee interest, corporate environmental policy, local solid waste laws and community support for recycling. The following materials are most commonly collected for recycling:

- **Paper:** Most types of paper are recyclable. Office paper is usually collected in two grades: "high-grade" and "mixed" paper. "High-grade" paper typically consists of white copier paper, white computer paper, white office stationery and white note paper. "Mixed" office paper includes nearly all paper generated in an office, including both white and colored paper, newspapers, file folders, manila envelopes and paperback books. Because it is minimally sorted, "mixed" paper is considered to be low quality and generally yields low market prices. Buyers of either type of paper

usually prohibit certain contaminants such as glossy paper, tape and envelopes with plastic windows. The highest prices are paid for sorted paper with little contamination.

- **Corrugated cardboard:** The commercial sector in the U.S. generates more corrugated cardboard than any other single material. Cardboard is a good candidate for recycling because it is easily separated from other materials. In addition, because of its bulk, collecting cardboard for recycling can significantly reduce the amount of waste requiring disposal. This can reduce the number of trash pickups or the size of solid waste containers needed, thereby lowering disposal costs. Collecting cardboard for recycling can involve removing contaminants, flattening boxes and bailing or tying them together for pickup.

- **Glass:** Many buyers require that collected glass be separated by color (clear, green, and brown) before pickup, although some will accept mixed glass. Typically, broken glass and paper labels are acceptable. Most buyers require that glass be clean and free of contaminants such as bottle caps.
- **Metal:** Aluminum and tin/steel cans, aluminum foil and other scrap metals are readily recyclable. Some metals, such as copper and aluminum, can yield high market prices. Collection requirements depend on the metal type and the local market situation.
- **Plastic:** While plastics recycling is a relatively young industry, it is expected to expand as processing technologies develop. To recycle recovered plastic materials into high-quality products, they must be separated by resin type. The plastic resins most commonly recycled are PET (polyethylene terephthalate), used in soda

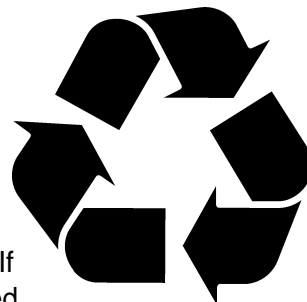
bottles and HDPE (high density polyethylene), used in milk jugs. Markets are often available to manufacturers and other commercial enterprises that generate large volumes of plastic waste, especially if the plastic is segregated by resin type.

- **Other recyclables:** Other materials, such as wood waste and textiles, are also recyclable. To find a buyer, identify the composition of the waste material and the amount generated. Then look for a market for the used material. You may start by looking in DHEC's "Index of Waste Minimization Resources." To order the "Index," call **(803) 896-8986** or visit **www.scdhec.net/eqc**.

How can your business set up a collection program?

- **Obtain management support.** After gaining the support of top management a recycling coordinator should be appointed. That person will work with individuals responsible for facilities management, materials handling, transportation and procurement, as well as with vendors, contractors, employees and the public.
- **Form a team.** Forming a waste reduction team helps to ensure a successful program. Together with the recycling coordinator, this group will plan, implement and manage the program.
- **Know your waste.** Determine what waste your company generates. You can do this by conducting a "waste assessment." A "waste assessment" provides baseline data that can be used to establish waste reduction and recycling goals and to monitor progress.

- **Set waste reduction goals.** Your goals will depend on the amount and type of waste generated. Remember to consider activities that actually prevent waste from being generated.
- **Find markets.** Before setting up your recycling program you need to find a buyer for the materials you want to recycle. Some may pick up certain materials and some may need materials delivered to them. A fee for this service may be involved, it may be free and sometimes the sale of the materials may even generate money. The money you receive for recycled materials depends on market conditions. If your business is small and this seems overwhelming, consider involving neighboring businesses.
- **Logistics.** Once you have decided what materials to collect and you have located a market, it is time to set up your collection program. Place collection containers in convenient locations as close as possible to areas where recyclables are generated. If the program is not convenient, some employees may not participate. Each employee should also have a recycling bin or cardboard box at their desk.
- **Buy recycled.** Buying recycled products, also known as "closing the loop," is your final step to a successful recycling program. Recycling is a complete cycle. People must buy recycled products to create recycling markets. If you are not buying recycled, you are not recycling.



DHEC's Office of Solid Waste Reduction and Recycling FYIs provide general information on environmental topics. Readers are encouraged to reproduce this material. For more information about solid waste issues, please call **1-800-768-7348** or visit our Web site at **www.scdhec.net/recycle**. Please send written correspondence to: DHEC's Office of Solid Waste Reduction and Recycling, 2600 Bull Street, Columbia, SC 29201.